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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
3 June 1966

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in South Vietnam
(As of 10:00 A.M. EDT)

1. Official reporting confirms that Thich Tam Chau has submitted his resignation as chairman of the Buddhist Institute, but it is not yet clear that his resignation has been formally accepted. There are indications that moderate Buddhists are attempting to persuade Chau to reconsider.

Chau's resignation was in part a ploy to try to improve his position with the Buddhist militants.

2. Chau, since his return from Ceylon, has been under heavy pressure from the Buddhist extremists either to go along with an all-out effort to bring down the Ky government or face expulsion from the Institute chairmanship. Press reports indicate that Chau's resignation was submitted after a stormy session by Institute leaders at which five younger monks threatened immediate self-immolation if the compromise agreement with Ky and Chief of State Thieu were approved by the Buddhist church.

Tri Quang had cabled his disapproval of the agreement from Hue. According to the Saigon press, Chau's close follower Thich Ho Giac has also resigned as deputy chief of the Buddhist chaplain corps. Saigon communique variously state that the Institute is temporarily under control of deputy chairmen Thich Phap Tri and Thien Hoa, both southerners, and of Thich Quang Lien,

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the somewhat wavering Yale-educated monk who is, however, generally identified as a moderate.

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Chau's resignation will rapidly lead to a takeover of the Buddhist Institute by the extremists and police thus anticipate more violence.

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4. The situation in Hue, and elsewhere in I Corps on the anniversary of Buddha's birth, is quiet. Barricades set up on the streets of Hue by the struggle forces have been removed today. I Corps commander General Lam told the US Marine commander in Da Nang today that the "Hue problem is solved," although he admitted difficulties still lie ahead. He also confirmed that, as an outcome of the recent meeting between Premier Ky and General Thi, Thi was now helping to solve the Hue situation. Earlier, Thi had been quoted as stating he was personally representing Ky in the effort to restore Saigon's authority over the city. There are still no reports, however, that the 1st Division elements now in Hue are taking action to disarm student dissidents.

5. Saigon is reported quiet today, although the press indicates that the Buddhist Institute is closing its doors to Buddhist followers attempting to celebrate Buddha's birthday. A communique issued yesterday by Tam Chau prior to his resignation had generally appealed for a normal religious commemoration by monks and nuns at their own pagodas. The same communique had claimed an amiable agreement with Ky and Thieu, who had "gladly promised to give up power to other persons following reconstitution of the Directorate."

6. According to a press report from Hue, Tri Quang tonight (Saigon time) stated that Buddhist followers would be urged to boycott the constitutional assembly elections in September, and that the Buddhists could not agree to any elections organized under the present government. Quang also apparently reiterated his attacks on the US for supporting the Thieu-Ky government.

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7. Hanoi Radio today denounced the Buddhist Institute-government agreement as a "farce" staged by the Thieu-Ky clique and "US agent" Tam Chau, and declared that the recent grenade attack on Tri Quang's lieutenant Thien Minh was a US-Saigon "plot" to eliminate a voice opposed to this "trick" of a negotiated reconciliation. Both Hanoi and the Liberation Front radios attacked the sending of troops to Hue as an example of US-Saigon efforts to repress the opposition forces. The Front--possibly in an oblique reference to Tri Quang's earlier appeals for US support--observed that some groups had "made a mistake in hoping that the Americans will side with them to overthrow Thieu and Ky."

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